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You are Born in the World of Conceptualisation

One of the early visitors one morning was an office-bearer of one of the European Vedanta Societies. As usual, Shri. Yolaraj came straight to the point and asked him if he had any questions to ask or any points to discuss. When the visitor said that he would like to listen for a while to what Shri. Yolaraj had to say before he could ask any questions, Shri Yolaraj told him that since he was an office-bearer of one of the active Vedanta Societies with a fairly impressive membership, he might start the dialogue by telling us how they go about explaining this rather elusive subject to an interested newcomer to the society.

Visitor: Well, we speak to him first about Yogic physical poses because a westerner is basically interested in the wellbeing of his body. 'Yoga' to him means being able to make the body do feats of physical endurance and mental concentration which would be impossible without knowledge of Yoga. Thereafter, i.e. after a course of Yoga-asanas, we proceed to tell him that he is not the body but something apart from the body.

Shri. Yolaraj: This raises two questions: one, what is the starting point of even cognising the body; in other words, is there not something within the body, in the absence of which you would not be able to cognise either your own body or that of someone else. Two, would the teacher himself have a very clear idea about his own 'identity' as far as he himself is concerned – if he is not the body, who or what is he?

Visitor: I am not sure exactly what you mean.

Shri. Y.: The body is only an instrument, an apparatus

which would be totally useless but for the life force within, the aliveness, the sense of 'I AM', being alive, the consciousness which provides the sense of being PRESENT. Indeed, this conscious presence — not ABC or XYZ being present, but conscious presence as such — is what one IS, and not the ~~body~~ the phenomenal appearance that the body is. When this consciousness, feeling the need of ~~some~~ support, mistakenly identifies itself with the ~~its~~ body, — and gives up its universality for the limitation of a ~~single~~ particular body — that the individual is 'born'. This is the first point which the teacher must himself have a firm conviction about.

The other basic aspect is that the teacher must also have a very clear ~~understanding~~ apprehension of ~~of~~ how the 'yoga' — union — between the body and the consciousness came about. In other words, the teacher must have no doubt at all about his own true nature; ~~in order~~ for this, he must understand the nature of the body, and the consciousness or the beingness or the I-am-ness, and also the nature of the phenomenal world.

Visitor (laughing) — This is exactly the reason why I am here. I shall be here about a week and I shall attend both the morning and evening sessions.

Shri. M. — Are you sure you are doing the right thing? You have come here with a certain amount of knowledge. If you persist in listening to me you may come to the conclusion that all that knowledge is nothing but a bundle of useless concepts — and, what is more, that you yourself are a concept, born in the womb of conceptualising! You will be then be like a person who suddenly realises that his hoard of wealth

has suddenly, one overnight turned into ashes. What then? Would it not be better – safer – to return home with your 'wealth' intact?

Visitor (responding to the humour): I'll take the chance: I would rather know the real value of the wealth that I think I possess. I have a feeling, though, that the kind of wealth that will remain after the useless wealth has been thrown out, would be priceless & and without any burden!

Shri. J.: So be it. Now tell me, who do you think you are?

Visitor: I doubt if it can really be put into words. But it would seem that I am not the body but the sense of conscious presence.

Shri J: Let me put it to you very briefly – your body is the growth of that seed emission from the union of your parents which was conceived in your mother's womb. This emission is the essence of the food consumed by your parents. Your body is, therefore, made of the food essence and is sustained also by food and water. And this sense of presence – consciousness – is the flavour of the food essence which constitutes the body: like sweetness is the flavour of the sugar, the latter being the essence of sugar-cane. But do understand that the body in can exist only for a certain period of time and when the material of which the body is made is ultimately deteriorates to the extent that the body 'dies', the life force and the consciousness will also disappear from that body. So what will happen to 'YOU'?

Visitor: But would the consciousness disappear?

Shri. J: In the absence of the body can consciousness be conscious of itself? Consciousness, in the

absence of the body, will no longer be manifest. Then, too we are back again to the starting point: Who or what are you?

Visitor: As I said before, it cannot be really put into words.

Shri. M.: Of course it cannot be put into words, but do you KNOW it? Once you express it, it would be a concept. But as a conceiver of a concept, are you not yourself a concept? Are you not really born from the very womb of conceptualization?! So, let it be a concept – but who are you? – or, if you prefer, as I do, – what are you?

Visitor: I think what I am is conscious presence.

Shri. M.: You said: you think! Who is it that thinks? Is it not your consciousness itself on which any thought could appear? And, as we have seen, consciousness, or Presence, is time-bound along with the body. That is why I told you earlier that it is necessary to apprehend the nature of this body + life force (Prana) – Consciousness.

What you are is 'presence' only so long as the body is, a manifested phenomenon is there. What were you before the body and consciousness came upon you spontaneously. I say 'spontaneously' because you were not consulted about being presented with a body, nor did your parents specifically expect to have "you" as their son. Were you then not "absence" rather than 'presence' before the body-consciousness state arose on you?

Visitor: I am not sure that I understand this.

Shri. M.: Now look, for anything to APPEAR to exist, there has to be a background of absolute absence – absolute absence of both presence and as

well as absence. Is this clear? ~~For~~ Any presence can appear only out of absence. If there is presence even of absence, ~~no~~ there can be neither phenomenon nor cognising. Therefore, total absolute absence implies total absence of conceptualising. That is your true original state. ~~'You' are born in the~~ I repeat: 'you' are born in the womb of conceptualising. In that state of total absence, spontaneously arises a speck of consciousness - the concept I AM - and on the original state of unicity arises duality: duality of subject-object, right and wrong, pure and impure - reasoning, comparing, judging etc.

Visitor: This has certainly been a revelation to me although I have been reading about Vedanta for quite some time. I shall come again.

Shri M.: Are you clear about this? You ARE prior to all conceptualising. What you ~~APPEAR~~ to be, as a phenomenon, is nothing but conceptual. What you really ARE cannot be comprehended for the very simple reason that in non-conceptuality, there cannot be any one to comprehend what you are!